



City of Seattle Search for Environmentally Friendly Cleaning Products is a Success
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For City of Seattle departments, purchasing is more than shopping for price. In a review that included safety and environmental requirements as well as how well products get the job done, City staff have identified over two dozen cleaning products for “green cleaning”.

During the past year, an interdepartmental team developed environmental and safety criteria and conducted performance trials for products to be used regularly in City facilities. The team is composed of City employees who use cleaning products as part of their regular jobs, environmental staff, purchasing staff, and building managers. Additional staff who regularly clean the City’s various facilities helped try out the products that met the new criteria.

The changes in purchasing help the City take into account the views of staff using the products, the effects on people working in and visiting City facilities and on the environment. It’s all part of the City’s initiatives in “environmental purchasing” and considering use and disposal impacts as well as initial purchase prices.

The Team chose seven common cleaning tasks for which products would be solicited:

- Toilet Bowl Cleaning
- Glass Cleaning
- General Purpose Cleaning
- Basin, Tub & Tile Cleaning
- Deodorizing
- Combination Cleaning-Disinfecting
- Disinfecting

The product review consisted of three steps: (1) environmental and safety criteria screening; (2) performance trials by janitorial staff; (3) price review. Each step depended on the previous step; if a product failed a prior step, it was disqualified from further consideration.

Our intention was to identify as many suitable products and vendors as we could, so that staff would have choices and flexibility appropriate to the variations in facilities they clean. The Team aims to have the City stop buying products which do not meet our environmental and safety criteria, and our experience tells us there are now many effective and less-toxic alternatives.

Vendors were required to provide information on product ingredients and characteristics, either directly to the City evaluators or through a third-party certifier. Building upon similar efforts in other jurisdictions, the Team and their consultant adopted strict safety and environmental criteria. Among these were “Pass/Fail” requirements, such as

- no cancer-causing or reproductive toxins,
- limits on strong acids and caustics,
- VOC limits, and
- no aerosols.

Products meeting these criteria were further screened and scored on

- safety categories such as effects on skin and eyes, and
- environmental impacts such as biodegradability, presence of phosphates, dyes, and packaging.*

(Link to full list of criteria and scoring)

Ten companies submitted responses, for a total of 49 products (some products were submitted for more than one cleaning task). Of these, 28 products, including at least two choices for each of the named cleaning tasks, were found to be acceptable for the second step, “on-the-job” performance trials.

To determine how well the products performed, more than 30 City custodians and laborers applied the products in settings ranging from gymnasium showers to offices. They rated ease of use, comfort (odors skin or breathing discomfort; etc.), and cleaning results compared to their “usual” product. While the products received differing ratings on performance, all 28 were deemed satisfactory.

Following the final step, price review, the City is awarding contracts to 6 vendors. The companies and products are listed below (note that in some cases the manufacturer is different from the local supplier).

| Cleaning Job (and Number of Products) | Vendors | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|------------|
| | Naturally Yours | Clean Environment | Walter E.Nelson | Coastwide | Bay City | R & D |
| Toilet Bowl (4) | NY7 Clinging Toilet Bowl Cleaner | | -- | Sustainable Earth Toilet and Urinal Cleaner | EnviroSolutions ES55 Bowl and Urinal Cleaner | H2Orange 2 |
| Glass (5) | NY6 Glass Cleaner | N 13 Non-amoniated Glass Cleaner | Rochester Midland EnviroCare Glass, | Sustainable Earth Glass and Surface Cleaner | -- | H2Orange 2 |
| General Purpose (7) | NY 2 General Purpose Cleaner | N 46 Super Orange Cleaner | RM EnviroCare Low Foam All Purpose and RM EnviroCare Tough Job | Sustainable Earth General Purpose | EnviroSolutions ES77 General Purpose Cleaner, | H2Orange 2 |
| Basin, Tub & Tile (5) | -- | N 7 Basin-Tub-Tile Cleaner | RM EnviroCare Washroom Fixture Cleaner | Sustainable Earth Washroom Tub &Tile | EnviroSolutions ES53 Cream Cleanser | H2Orange 2 |
| Deodorizer (5) | -- | C 14 Cycle Fresh Deodorizer, | RM EnviroCare Air Freshener Deodorizer and RM EnviroCare Liqui-Bac Deodorizer | Sustainable Earth Odor Eliminator | -- | H2Orange 2 |
| Combined Cleaner-Disinfectant (5) | -- | C 128 Cycle (Combined Cleaner-Disinfectant) | RM EnviroCare Neutral Disinfectant | Virustat DC | EnviroSolutions ES64 Neutral Disinfectant | H2Orange 2 |
| Straight Disinfectant (3) | -- | C 18 Cycle Sanitizer | -- | Saniquat 512 | -- | -- |

We realized our process would involve more people and take much longer than previous contracting. We believe the extra time for evaluating environmental and performance features was well spent; the staff most affected by the products already know why we are changing our purchases and see the results of their input. The Team is proceeding with outreach and education for additional City staff. Many thanks to all the participants. Please feel free to send us your questions and comments.

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